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Keeping it Real

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Pastor Dale L. Crawley Sr.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

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Eschatology – Tribulation

Bible Doctrine by Michael Bere

Between the rapture and the second coming there will be a seven-year period of time on earth known as the **Tribulation**. There will be judgments poured out upon this earth that will be unlike anything that has happened before it or after it in the history of this planet. God is longsuffering, but eventually His judgment upon this earth must come. Since Christians will meet the Lord in the air at the rapture, they will not be affected by the Tribulation judgments on earth.

In Scripture the word tribulation has three different meanings:

- It can mean trouble in general. (John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3; 12:12)
- It can mean the seven-year period between the rapture and the second coming. (Dan. 9:24–27; 12:1; Jer. 30:7–9)
- It can mean the second half of the seven-year period, called “the great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21). [The first half of the seven-year period is often referred to as the “beginning of sorrows” (Matt. 24:8).]

A. The purpose of the Tribulation

1. To **judge a Christ-rejecting world** (Rev. 15:1; 16:1; 19:15)
“And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.” Rev. 16:1
2. To **reveal Satan’s true character** (Rev. 12:7–12)
3. To **demonstrate how much men’s sinful hearts can imagine and do** (Rev. 16:8–11, 21)

4. To **humble the nation of Israel to the place of repentance** (Jer. 30:7–9; Zech. 12:9–14:5)
The Tribulation is called the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble.”

5. To **eternally save multitudes of people from every nation**

After the rapture, the only ones left on earth are unsaved people. Many of them realize what has happened and accept Jesus Christ as Savior. In an intensified effort to save multitudes, God empowers many of these Tribulation converts to preach the gospel “in all the world for a witness unto all nations” before the end comes (Matt. 24:14). Those who receive the gospel will be persecuted mercilessly by a godless society and will be martyred for their faith.

- a. Early martyrs (Rev. 6:9–11)
- b. 144,000 Jews (Rev. 7:1–8; 14:1–5)
- c. Countless Gentiles (Rev. 7:9–17)
- d. Two witnesses (Rev. 11:2–14)
- e. Other Jews (Rev. 12:13–17)
- f. Beast rejecters (Rev. 13:7)
- g. Followers of the Lamb (Rev. 14:4–5)
- h. Commandment keepers (Rev. 14:12–13)

6. To prepare the world for the millennial reign of Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:1–6)

B. The participants of the Tribulation

1. The Antichrist (Rev. 13:1–10)

- a. His wonder (Rev. 13:1–2)

There has been a tremendous “awe” attached to this mysterious individual of the future. What one believes about him should be based on Scripture.

(1) The wonder of his names

(a) Antichrist

The prefix anti- has two possible meanings. It is usually thought of as “against”; therefore, the Antichrist is “**against Christ.**” This will certainly be true. But the prefix also means “in the place of ” or “in the stead of.” He will come “in the place of Christ” as a counterfeit, false Messiah. He will come promising peace. Halfway through the Tribulation, his true character will be revealed. The word “antichrist” is found only in the epistles of John, the author of the book of Revelation (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2

John 7).

(b) “Man of sin” (2 Thess. 2:3)

(c) “Son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3)

Because of this verse some have suggested that the Antichrist might be Judas reincarnated. Judas is given the title “son of perdition” in John 17:12. However, that does not seem to be enough evidence to confirm that as factual.

(d) “Prince that shall come” (Dan. 9:26)

(e) “Beast” (Rev. 11:7; 13:1–2)

This is the most commonly used name for the Antichrist. It is found thirty-six times in the book of Revelation. He is pictured as coming out of the sea (Rev. 13:1). Since the “sea” often speaks of the Gentile nations, some believe that the antichrist must be a Gentile. However, Daniel 11:37 is used to suggest he may be Jewish (“Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers”). No one knows for sure.

(2) The wonder of his number (Rev. 13:16–18)

There has also been an “awe” attached to his number, 666. People have used that number to “decode” the identity of the Antichrist. Although it is true that in Bible times letters had numerical equivalents, the idea has been taken to an extreme. If “A” = 100, “B” = 101, “C” = 102, etc., then HITLER = 107 + 108 + 119 + 111 + 104 + 117 = 666. Hitler’s death confirmed that he was not the Antichrist. But this has not been the only century which has tried such mathematical gymnastics. After the first century some attempted to make Nero the Antichrist by taking the consonants of “Kaisar Neron” and obtaining the sum of 666.

The mark of the Beast will be given to those who worship the Antichrist and his image. Evidently the number will be necessary to buy or sell. Perhaps laser-beam scanners will be used to read the number on the hand or forehead.

b. His wound (Rev. 13:3)

The “wonder” of this individual increases because he appears

to have the ability to come back from the dead (another example of his being a “counterfeit Christ”). But did he really die? The phrase “as it were” might indicate his “death” and “resurrection” were faked to gain the confidence of the world in his ability.

c. His wonders (Rev. 13:3)

The Antichrist seems to have a wonderful charisma. His ability to influence the world is further seen in 2 Thess. 2:11–12.

d. His worship (Rev. 13:4, 12, 15)

He commits the Abomination of Desolation by demanding worship. In every way he wants to take the place of the true Messiah. Because of the great power given him by Satan (“the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” Rev. 13:2), he appears invincible. As a result, the world falls at his feet.

e. His warfare (Rev. 13:7)

The phrase “power was given unto him” is used throughout Revelation to remind the reader that the only power the Antichrist can have is what God allows him to have (Rev. 12:9; 13:4). The Antichrist’s true character begins to be revealed. He is not like the true Christ at all. The Antichrist’s power is in inflicting suffering; Christ’s power in the lives of believers is the result of His accepting suffering.

“Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?”

Rev. 13:4

2. The False Prophet (Rev. 13:11–16)

a. He is called “another beast” (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10) or “beast coming up out of the earth” (Rev. 13:11).

b. He is the third member of the “Unholy trinity,” Satan’s counterfeit of the true trinity. (Rev. 16:13)

Personage	Counterfeit
God the Father	Satan (Dragon)—the power behind the scene
God the Son	Antichrist (First Beast)—does his “father’s” bidding
God the Holy Spirit	False Prophet (Second Beast)—speaks not of himself but points to another

- c. He causes men to worship the Antichrist. (Rev. 13:12)
- d. He performs great miracles. (Rev. 13:13)
- e. He “animates” the image of the first beast. (Rev. 13:14–15)
“And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.” Rev.13:15

Unless God gives him the ability to create life, the False Prophet probably activates some type of a robot. Since the apostle John has never seen anything like this as he writes Revelation, he describes it with the language available to him in the first century.

- f. He requires a mark in the right hand or forehead. (Rev. 13:16–17)
- g. He sentences those disobedient to him to death. (Rev. 13:15)

Many will refuse to take the mark of the Beast and will be killed as soon as they are captured. Many Jews will be in that number. They will flee into the wilderness to escape the death penalty (Matt. 24:15–26; Rev. 12:13–17). When all hope seems gone, Jesus will return to the earth (Matt. 24:27–31).

- h. He is cast with the Antichrist into the Lake of Fire at the Battle of Armageddon. (Rev. 19:20)

3. The two witnesses (Rev. 11:3–12)

God’s two witnesses minister during the first half of the Tribulation and are given unlimited power. Many suggestions have been made as to their identity. Since the Bible does not reveal who they are, one should not be dogmatic in his belief. Moses and Elijah, both of whom were present at the transfiguration, have been suggested as possibilities

- a. Elijah
 - (1) He was a prophet. (Rev. 11:3, 6, 10)
 - (2) It was prophesied that he would return. (Mal. 4:5–6)
 - (3) His powers were similar to those of the two witnesses. (cf. 1 Kings 17:1 and Rev. 11:6)

- (4) He has not yet died. (2 Kings 2:11) Some suggest that Hebrews 9:27 (“it is appointed unto men once to die”) requires that every person die. However, this is not a good argument. Death means “separation.” Elijah was “separated” from his old body and appeared “in [his] glory” (Luke 9:30–31) on the mount of Transfiguration. Hebrews 9:27 must be taken as a general rule. All believers alive at the rapture will not “die.” And some like Lazarus and Eutychus died more than once.

b. Moses

- (1) He also was a prophet. (Rev. 11:3, 6, 10)
Moses represents the law, and Elijah represents the prophets.
- (2) He was present at the Transfiguration. (Luke 9:30)
- (3) He represents one of the two major miracle-working eras of the Old Testament.
- (a) Moses and Aaron
- (b) Elijah and Elisha
- (4) He brought plagues upon the earth by the power of God.
(Exo. 7:19; Rev. 11:6)
- (5) Satan disputed over his body because he knew he would return as one of the two witnesses. (Jude 9)

c. Unknown

It is not known for sure who the two witnesses will be. Since John the Baptist partially fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 4:6 (Matt. 11:11–14; 17:11–13; Luke 1:17), it appears that the two witnesses must come only in the power of Moses and Elijah.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Most Christians acknowledge the reality of a time of tribulation, but there is considerable debate concerning when this time will occur and who will be affected by it.

Dispensational Premillennialism

Dispensational premillennialists believe that Jesus' prophecy of a future Tribulation will affect Israel but not the church. Prior to the tribulation, the church will be raptured out

of the world when Christ suddenly descends from the clouds. The Antichrist is an integral part of Daniel's prophecy concerning the seventieth week of years, and, according to dispensationalists, this prophecy only deals with God's plans for Israel (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15-22). The rise of the Antichrist begins a seven-year period of tribulation designed to bring Israel back to God. In Daniel's seventieth week, the Antichrist first befriends Israel. Then after three and a half years, the Antichrist blasphemes the all-powerful God and aggressively persecutes the Jews (Dan 7:8,20-27; 9:24-27; Matt 24:15-22). During this period of unspeakable suffering, many Jews recognize Christ as the Messiah and begin to turn back to God. After these seven years of horror, Christ returns to defeat his enemies at Armageddon and begin his thousand-year reign of peace (Matt 24:29-31).

The Scriptures concerning the Tribulation

1. Daniel 9:24–27

This passage describes the Seventieth Week of Daniel, or the Tribulation. Daniel gives the first indication of the length of time of the Tribulation. The Jewish people were accustomed to thinking in terms of “weeks” of years or seven-year periods of time. (Jacob worked for Rachel for one “week of years,” etc.) This concept is further confirmed by expressions such as “forty and two months” (Rev. 11:2) and “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Rev. 11:3) for one-half of the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27).

3 1/2 years = 42 months = 1,260 days
Prophetic years consist of 360 days each.

At the beginning of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will make a covenant of peace with the nation of Israel. But in the middle of the seven years of Tribulation he will reveal his true nature and break his covenant with Israel. At that time he will commit the **Abomination of Desolation**. He will commit this by desecrating the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and demanding worship of himself.

2. Matthew 24–25

This passage is in the Olivet Discourse. Christ is speaking to His disciples (representatives of the Jewish nation) and promising them He will return to the earth to set up His earthly kingdom. He describes in detail Israel's persecution just before He returns to the earth in glory.

3. Revelation 4–19

The largest section of the book of Revelation is devoted to the discussion of the Tribulation. The similarities between the Olivet Discourse

and Revelation 6 are intriguing.

Event	Matthew 24	Revelation 6
War	24:6	6:4
Famine	24:7	6:5–6
Pestilence	24:7	6:8
Earthquake	24:7	6:12

D. The progress of the Tribulation

1. As the Tribulation progresses, **the punishments become more severe.**

As the end of the Tribulation approaches, the judgments accelerate. The first part of the Tribulation seems fairly slow in developing. But by the end, the judgments of man, Satan, and God are all overlapping each other. The judgments become more and more intense. For the nation of Israel, all hope seems gone. But just when everything is the darkest, Jesus breaks through the blue and returns to the earth.

- a. Seal judgments: Rev. 6:1–19:21
- b. Trumpet judgments: Rev. 8:6–19:21
- c. Vial (bowl) judgments: Rev. 16:1–19:21

2. As the Tribulation progresses, Satan and his **minions are revealed for what they really are.**

- a. The Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel. (Dan. 9:27)
- b. The Antichrist commits the Abomination of Desolation (he desecrates the temple and demands to be worshiped as God).

“And for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate.” Dan.9:27

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation . . . flee.”
Matt.24:15–16

“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation there of is nigh.” Luke21:20

“so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” 2Thess.2:4

“And he [the False Prophet] . . . causeth the earth . . . to worship the

first beast [the Antichrist].” Rev.13:12

c. God’s two witnesses are killed. (Rev. 11:7–13)

In the first half of the Tribulation (Rev. 11:1–6), God’s two witnesses have virtually unlimited ability to spread the gospel. But in the middle of the Tribulation, they are killed and their dead bodies lie in the street for “three days and an half.” Perhaps it will be by the means of satellite communications that “they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies.” The people on earth will rejoice and exchange gifts because of the death of God’s two witnesses. But after the three and one-half days, they will be resurrected and ascend to heaven. All the earth will witness a resurrection and an ascension.

d. Many will be martyred because of their refusal to “worship the image of the beast” and take his mark. (Rev. 13:15-18)

“And he [the False Prophet] had power to give life unto the image of the beast [the Antichrist], that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.”

Receiving the mark of the Beast during the Tribulation period is the “unpardonable sin” of that time.

“If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.” Rev.14:9–11

THE SEVEN SEALS

1. Rider on the white horse (6:1-2)

Description

A rider on a white horse has a bow and a crown and rides out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

Possible meanings

Some believe that this rider symbolizes the spread of the Good News or that the rider is Christ himself. Others suggest that this symbolizes mankind's lust for conquest.

2. Rider on the red horse (6:3-4)

Description

A rider on a red horse has a great sword and is permitted to take peace from the earth so that people will kill one another.

Possible meanings

This rider symbolizes coming warfare, even civil warfare, with great bloodshed.

3. Rider on the black horse (6:5-6)

Description

A rider on a black horse has a pair of scales and brings famine and pestilence on the earth.

Possible meanings

This rider symbolizes famine and pestilence.

4. Rider on the pale horse (6:7-8)

Description

A rider on a pale horse is called Death and has Hades with him.

Possible meanings

This rider is called Death, and Hades (the grave) is his inseparable companion. Together they are given power to kill a fourth of the earth.

5. Souls of the martyrs under the altar (6:9-11)

Description

The souls of the martyrs who were killed for being faithful in their witness are under the altar crying out for vengeance for their blood.

Possible meanings

The breaking of this seal announces God's plan to judge those who persecuted believers.

6. Great earthquake (6:12-17)

Description

People on the earth face calamities: a huge earthquake and strange occurrences in the sky.

Possible meanings

The wrath and power of the Lamb are seen in the cataclysmic earthquake and the supernatural events in the sky.

7. Silence in heaven (8:1)

Description

When the last seal is opened, there is complete silence in heaven.

Possible meanings

The seventh seal either begins the next cycle of judgments, or it signals the end and Christ's return.

COSMIC DISTURBANCES AT THE DAY OF THE LORD

The images in Revelation are not that unusual when compared to the prophets' description of the coming day of the Lord. The Old Testament has many of the same images that John saw (verses quoted from NLT).

Isa 2:10-22 " . . . When the Lord rises to shake the earth, his enemies will crawl with fear into holes in the ground . . . "

Isa 13:10 "The heavens will be black above them. No light will shine from stars or sun or moon."

Isa 34:4 "The heavens above will melt away and disappear like a rolled-up scroll. The stars will fall from the sky, just as withered leaves and fruit fall from a

tree."

Jer 4:24-29 "I looked at the earth, and it was empty and formless. I looked at the heavens, and there was no light . . ."

Ezek 32:7-8 "When I blot you out, I will veil the heavens and darken the stars. I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give you its light. Yes, I will bring darkness everywhere across your land . . ."

Hos 10:8 " . . . They will beg the mountains to bury them and the hills to fall on them."

Joel 2:11,31 " . . . The day of the Lord is an awesome, terrible thing. Who can endure it? . . . The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon will turn blood red . . ."

Joel 3:15 "The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will no longer shine."

Amos 8:8 "The earth will tremble for your deeds, and everyone will mourn. The land will rise up like the Nile River at floodtime, toss about, and sink again."

Nah 1:5-6 "In his presence the mountains quake, and the hills melt away; the earth trembles, and its people are destroyed. Who can stand before his fierce anger? Who can survive his burning fury? His rage blazes forth like fire, and the mountains crumble to dust in his presence."

Zeph 1:14-18 "The terrible day of the Lord is near . . . It is a day when the Lord's anger will be poured out. It is a day of terrible distress and anguish, a day of ruin and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, of clouds, blackness, trumpet calls, and battle cries . . . He will make a terrifying end of all the people on earth."

Mal 3:2 "But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal or like a strong soap that whitens clothes."

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

1. 8:7 Description
Hail and fire, mixed with blood, are hurled to the earth.

Results

A third of the earth, a third of the trees, and all green grass are burned up.

2. 8:8-9

Description

A great mountain of fire is thrown into the sea.

Results

A third of the sea becomes blood, killing one-third of its living creatures.

One-third of all ships on the sea are destroyed.

3. 8:10-11 Description

A flaming star falls out of the sky.

Results

A third of the earth's water is turned bitter, or polluted, killing many people.

4. 8:12-13 Description

One third of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened.

Results

There is less light from the sky, and people spend more time in darkness.

5. 9:1-11 Description

A star falls from the sky and opens the Abyss.

Results

Poisonous locusts are let loose to attack people on the earth for five months.

6. 9:13-21 Description

A war with huge numbers of mounted troops begins.

Results

A third of all the people on the earth are killed.

7. 11:14-14:20 Description

The final struggle between God and Satan -- good and evil -- takes place first in heaven, then on earth.

Results

Satan acts against God's plan, causing more destruction before he is finally defeated.

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